



Alaska History News

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Walter Johnson (far right in top photo) opens the gate of the moose fence in his apple orchard above Kachemak Bay while giving a tour to Frank Norris, Bruce Merrell and Terrence Cole (back to camera). Walter Johnson and Terence Cole continue the tour.

Homer Dishes Up Great Historical Cuisine

The reviews are in! The Pratt Museum and Kachemak Bay Campus dished out a wonderful Museums Alaska/Alaska Historical Society conference for 2007. In keeping with the theme, *Food For Thought: The Role of Food and Nutrition in Alaska History*, this year's papers were not only interesting, but they made the audience hungry. Bruce Parham discussed federal food programs during WWI. Jim King shared a few stories from the "Tiltin' Hilton" roadhouse, while Timothy Rawson gave a rousing presentation about provisions needed for climbing "Big Mac".

June McAtee looked at the personal story of reindeer herders and potato farmers living on the Kuskokwim River and William Simeone talked about Ahtna knowledge of Copper River salmon. Virginia Lacy, who gave one of the most delightful papers, provided intimate recollections about how food was more than subsistence, for it was the hub around which life rotated.

The mood was somber at the opening ceremony, as the State of the State speakers reminded members that Alaska history advocates still face hurdles as budgets are cut. Likewise, Ann Chandonnet, in her keynote address, discussed how global warming is drastically changing Alaska's indigenous menus. And, finally, our society President Bruce Merrell commemorated

the lives of three important Alaska historians who died this past year: Mike Dunning, Susan Grigg, and Lydia Black. Alaska history won't be the same without them.

Despite setbacks, the Alaska Historical Society still has much to look forward to. Students made a strong showing at the Homer conference. Elizabeth Kunibe, Shane Lopez, Christopher Roe, and Joshua Riley each gave excellent papers on topics ranging from tobacco plants, to Russian trade, military cuisine, and Homer homesteaders. 2008 marks the commencement of Alaska's Golden Anniversary. To celebrate, the University of Alaska Anchorage will host the AHS conference on October 16-18, thus providing another opportunity for Alaska historians to "pass the torch" to Alaska's future. See you in Anchorage!

Katie Ringsmuth,
Program Chair



2007
Awards
for
Excellence
Recipients
on page 6

Message from the President

We're All Exceptional

Ask anyone who has been here more than a decade how long he's been an Alaskan and he'll probably know the answer off the top of his head. Most of us wear our Alaskan years proudly, acting like life began when we "came into the country." As with religious conversions or years of sobriety, our lives didn't really take on meaning until we moved to the Last Frontier. Those lucky enough to be born here get to add "life-long" to their proud identification as Alaskans.

Have I lived here all my life? Not yet.

Just how exceptional are Alaskans? About three-quarters of us live near urban centers where day-to-day life is not so different from that in, say, Duluth, Minnesota. We live in frame houses with central heating and modern plumbing, we drive cars to get around and work in well-lit buildings, we eat essentially the same foods, we shop for the same things at the same stores (especially in Anchorage), we listen to the same radio, watch the same tv shows, and go to the same movies.

Consider this: the *Anchorage Daily News* regularly lists the top-grossing motion pictures nationally, side-by-side with the top movies in Anchorage. One week last fall the lists were

virtually identical, not only with the same titles but in the exact same order (except for one of the ten).

You don't hear it much anymore but we used to call the rest of the country "the States." There have been lots of similar terms, so many that the *Dictionary of Alaskan English* has a chapter devoted to terms used to describe

what is "Not Alaska" and giving examples of their usage through the years. "The Lower 48" and "Outside" are common but we also find "the lower states," "below," "down below," "the

National	boxoffice
Top 10 movies for Nov. 24-26, in millions of dollars	Anchorage
Gross this week, to date, weeks in release	Top 10 movies for Nov. 24-26, in dollars
Gross this week, to date, weeks in release	Gross this week, to date, weeks in release
1 Happy Feet \$37.03, \$99.25, two weeks	1 Happy Feet \$64,328, \$166,697, two weeks
2 Casino Royale \$30.78, \$94.05, two weeks	2 Casino Royale \$59,128, \$185,308, two weeks
3 Deja Vu \$20.57, \$28.64, one week	3 Deja Vu \$40,961, \$60,124, one week
4 Deck the Halls \$12.00, \$16.91, one week	4 Deck the Halls \$16,347, \$24,743, one week
5 Borat \$10.30, \$109.13, four weeks	5 Borat \$11,494, \$125,213, four weeks
6 Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause \$9.92, \$67.07, four weeks	6 Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause \$11,421, \$105,463, four weeks
7 Flushed Away \$5.75, \$57.26, four weeks	7 Flushed Away \$9,119, \$109,060, four weeks
8 Stranger Than Fiction \$5.72, \$32.50, three weeks	8 Stranger Than Fiction \$9,010, \$45,523, three weeks
9 Bobby \$4.85, \$6.10, two weeks	9 Tenacious D in: The Pick of Destiny \$8,126, \$14,978, one week
10 The Fountain \$3.76, \$5.45, one week	10 The Fountain \$7,069, \$12,423, one week

(Continued page 2.)

Message from the President

(Continued from front page.)

South," "stateside," "the continental U.S.," "the contiguous U.S.," and most interesting of all, "America."

These terms really come from a different time in our history. As communication and transportation have improved, the Outside is no longer far away, no longer so obviously "not Alaska." Regional differences have diminished around the country and around the world. Linguists tell us that regional slang and identifiable accents are going away, that the language we use is becoming more and more homogeneous. We Alaskans want to be different while at the same time immersing ourselves in what is familiar.

But if Alaskans don't have much claim to being exceptional, Alaska certainly does. Our geography makes us different from the rest of the country, of course—sheer size, weather extremes, a small population in a big land, our physical disconnect with the rest of the country.

As Steve Haycox and others have pointed out, our congressional delegation has fanned the flames of exceptionality at every opportunity and Alaska has borne the fruits of these efforts. Welcome but disproportionate federal dollars have flowed into the state for decades as successful arguments were made about the postal system, transportation, education, and cost of living being different up here.

There used to be a bumper sticker that said "We don't give a damn how they do it in the lower 48!" Since this self-righteous proclamation was presumably seen only on the streets and highways of Alaska, it is uncertain who it was for. Most likely it was meant to bolster regional pride and self-righteousness, like the flags and stickers that sprouted on vehicles after 9/11 but went largely unnoticed by the far-away terrorists.

Was Alaska exceptional? If it was, is it still today? How far have we come since statehood? And what lies ahead of us? Think about this and plan on coming to our annual meeting in Anchorage next fall. Even better, sign up to present a paper or put together a panel discussion about what statehood has meant to Alaska.

Bruce Merrell
President



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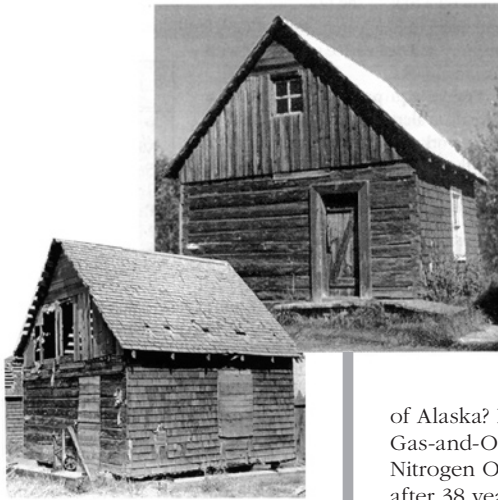
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It's quick, it's easy, and you receive the semiannual *Alaska History*, the quarterly newsletter *Alaska History News*, and discounts on publications.

As interest and writing on Alaska history seem to be sprouting like fireweed in the spring, a useful and popular feature is the society's new publication *The Alaska 67* with annotated recommendations of good books on Alaska history.

Send your application for membership to Alaska Historical Society, P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299; or join through the website: www.alaskahistoricalociety.org.

Notes from around the state



Kenai's Sanders Cabin today (top) and 1978.

Courtesy Mary Ford, Kenai Historical Society.

Local authors contributing historical columns to the local paper: been done before, but always worthwhile. The **Kenai Historical Society** newsletter thanks those members who have taken a turn.

They've also been in the house-moving business. Plans are to move cabins and a cannon from the old Russian post site of Fort Kenai to join historic Cabin No. 3 on KHS property. When all is done, this will be open to the public.

Where is the Industrial Cradle of Alaska? No, not Fairbanks or Anchorage. Gas-and-Oil City-on-the-Kenai. Agrium Kenai Nitrogen Operations, née Colliers, just closed after 38 years. VECO, the oil supply company much in the news this past year, also began there in 1968 when Bill Allen moved to Kenai. It has just been sold to CH2Mhill.

The **Kenai Peninsula Historical Association** had as the theme for its fall meeting the history of the Homer Electrical Association.



Are you a nostalgic person living in the Anchorage area? Or are you just a nostalgic person in general who is curious about old houses? What about Scandinavian Christmas customs? Whatever the case, you can experience the only historic house museum and a bit of Swedish Christmas on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, December 8 and 9, at the **Oscar Anderson House Museum** tours. Oscar was one of the first successful merchants during Anchorage's Tent City days and built a house in 1915 to celebrate his achievements. It's located at 420 M Street in Elderberry Park. Call 274-2336 for details.



The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** in Seward took time from planning its Christmas festivities (the train sounds particularly intriguing), to give the questions and answers asked of visitors last summer. It seems most people were part of two people arriving by car who were visiting for the first time. They also overwhelming felt the fairest admission fees were either \$3.00 or \$5.00 (\$4.00 got a measly 17% and only 3% marked \$6.00). A fun and informative exercise. If you haven't done it, you might give it a try.

Happy birthday to Anchorage! (April 26, of course.) The Seward folks note that the Alaska Engineering Commission began a railroad construction camp in 1915 they called Matanuska and staked out a town site. Lots were sold in July. The residents decided they preferred the name of Anchorage and incorporated in 1920.



Hayrides as part of a celebration of Christmas? The **Wasilla Knik Historical Society** is providing them as part of the big celebration held at the One Room Schoolhouse. Let's hope everyone is bundled up and keeps the promise of hot chocolate in mind when the ride's over. There is also potato jewelry to be found in the Page Museum. Locally grown Mat-Su potatoes are cut, dried, and painted to make necklaces and earrings. Do you want fries with that?



News from the **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society newsletter**: <http://www.sitkamaritime.org>

Go to the home page, and the top left link "current newsletter" will take you to the November newsletter as a pdf, with Jerry Dzugan's history of Greentop Harbor, and pictures and articles on the annual meeting in February on seining and other events.

Louis Bartos, a master sailmaker from Ketchikan who is also an expert in sail making history, gave a slide talk on the "Sails of the *Vasa*". This ship was launched and sank in 1628 but was amazingly preserved, was raised in 1961, and is now the subject of a museum in Stockholm. This is a very interesting ship, and its sails tell a story of the state of technology in the Age of Exploration.

There's something fascinating about old houses. Large, small, or in-between, they invariably rouse the imagination concerning former inhabitants. The **Sitka Historical Society** newsletter contains information on the history of the "Sunburst" house and its various owners, which included some of the leading merchants of the town. Its lot had nine sides and a 12-foot frontage, but no one explained why the stylized sun was painted on the front of the house.



Trollers tied up in Sitka, mid 1920s. Japanski Island government coaling buildings in background.

Courtesy Sitka Historical Society.



Okay, here's a hypothetical situation. You are new to Alaska and have been told there will be a talk by an expert on the history of the last 60 years around Fairbanks and the Mat-Su. Is this person a true authority? The **Palmer Historical Society** newsletter reports their speaker this fall described his Fairbanks childhood when "a lot of old timers were still hovering around the woodstove. They told their tales, rubbed their hands, and smiled with missing teeth as (he) looked on." Yep, that's the real thing.

Notes from around the state



Wesley W. Westlak, KPU cable splicer, ca. 1936.

Tongass Historical Museum, THS 75.8.10.40.

They also note the current owner of the 1935 building known as the Trading Post, then the Recreation Hall, and finally as Deb's Family Store is dedicated to restoring it. She needs help. Memories, anecdotes; any recollections are welcome. Send to ethos@mtaonline.net and gratitude followed by recognition will be your reward.

Speaking of the Internet, whip on over to the new Web site, wild and crazy though the name is; www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org. Some nice photographs and useful information. Of course you can always write the group at Post Office Box 1935, Palmer, Alaska, 99645-1935.



It is highly unlikely a sixteen-year-old girl who made a scrapbook from her happy summer in Ketchikan in 1939 ever had any idea others than the family would find it of interest. Some of the contents are featured in the **Tongass Historical Museum and Totem Heritage Center** newsletter and are delightful reading. Fifty years later she returned with a daughter, and after her death last year, her daughters donated it to the museum.

Ketchikan is also the first municipality in the United States to own all three of its major utilities; electric, water, and telephone. A new display shows off its history.



Marble quarries, caves, and Margaret Bell, author born and raised there mean Prince of Wales Island in Southern Southeast Alaska (almost as enchanting a name as Northern Southeast Alaska). There are also statistics about Alaskans' joyous adoption of air travel; in 1939 there were 116 times as many commercial planes as in the U. S for example. You'll also read a nice biography of John C. Callbreath, Wrangell pioneer who operated steamboats on the Stikine River, and a nice piece on Alaska potatoes. And where will you find all this? In *Wrangell History*, now in its third year of monthly issues and still only \$20.00 a year, with proceeds going to the Friends of the Wrangell Museum. Post Office Box 2019, Wrangell, Alaska, 99929. Pat Roppel won our **Elva Scott Best Newsletter** award this year.



Already getting into the winter swing, the **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society** is reminding members there are photographs and newspapers to inventory. They also enjoyed the 60th anniversary of the founding of the town and triumphantly corrected those in error about the name *Chugiak*, meaning "Place of Many Places" which was voted the top name in March of 1947.



Creative, artistic souls were recruited for the poster design contest being held by the **Kodiak Historical**

Society. The bicentennial of the Baranov Museum is coming up next year and a suitable celebration is being planned. The theme is *Connecting Past and Present: 200 Years of History in These Walls*. Look for some great designs.

Bruce Merrell, Most Honorable, Highly Esteemed, and Revered President of our Society [Me? Trying to curry favor? How dare you! Ed.] was the guest speaker at the Kodiak annual meeting.

One of the joys of modern life is the ease with which photographs can be scanned and sent anywhere, or just copied. Be sure to add any identification you have, and present them to your local society. Kodiak is gloating over 165 such donated recently.



Tony Dimond was a political star from Valdez, serving in many capacities from mayor to the Alaska Territorial Delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, ending his service as District Judge for the Third Division of Alaska. The **Valdez Museum** acquired around 1,000 documents and photographs formerly belonging to him in a rather odd way. The daughter of his longtime secretary sold them at a yard sale in Wasilla. [Editor's comment: A few years ago a woman traveler said she'd noted the Dimond High School in Anchorage and the Dimond Courthouse in Juneau. Why? I told her about him. "Oh," She said. "I thought Alaskans just didn't know how to spell Diamond.]"

The annual fundraiser, *The Roadhouse Dinner*, was a vast success this year. The theme, honoring the 1977 building of the terminus of the Alaska Pipeline, was *Pig Tales from the Mancamp*, showing every trade has its own language.



Tony Dimond with his family in Washington, D.C. in the 1940s.

Courtesy the Valdez Museum newsletter.

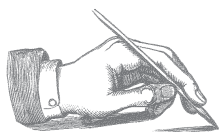


(above) Children's christmas program
at the church in Yakutat.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections,
Flhoki Kayamori Collection, ASL-P55-634.

(right) Audience watching the
Christmas children's program
at the ANB Hall in Yakutat.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections,
Flhoki Kayamori Collection, ASL-P55-596.



*We welcome your letters,
news and pictures.
Please send them to the editor:*

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www.alaskahistoricalociety.org

Cooper Landing Historical Society and Museum reports a busy summer and plans to publish a historic cookbook with local photographs and recipes next May. They also had a fall museum refurbishment.



It's hard to find a place more Interior than Eagle, the **Eagle Historical Society and Museums** newsletter reports. Their weather over the past 37 years has varied from -72°F in winter to a summer high of 96°F. Weather, from forest fires to winter pack ice, not to mention the time a caribou got its antlers tangled in the wire, led to the 1908 abandonment of telegraph lines and the use of radio in Fort Egbert, near Eagle. The Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) had a long history in Alaska. The two engines that powered the station are in a new display in the Eagle Historic District.

If you want to rile the residents of Alaska's smaller places, try sending in government outsiders to change things. A good portion of Eagle's 120 inhabitants protested the plans of the State or some agency to pave some streets in town this summer. They wanted their gravel and got it. Shows what determination and community spirit can do. Want to know more? Try www.EagleAK.org.



There's always so much going on at the **Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center** that it's easy to miss some of the small-but-clever ideas. An Alaska History Reading Group has been formed to discuss books on a monthly basis. Doesn't that sound like a fun winter idea? Meet at a local café and chat while you eat.



Cook Inlet Historical Society has announced its Brown Bag Lunch programs at the museum for the coming year have a theme. History of Resource Development in Alaska will present all sides of the debate. Call 907/346-2755 for more information.



True to the city's mining roots, the **Juneau-Douglas Museum** is installing a new assay lab display. They've also made a zoetrope to add to their Playful Pastimes exhibit (is there a tiny sense that they're having as much fun as the kids with this?)



Smokey and Eddie are two chums found on the 1950 U.S. Forest Service cabin on the grounds of the **Hope & Sunrise Historical & Mining Museum**. Be sure to visit if you're in the area next summer.





Bruce and Ted Merrell.



Dennis Chapman and Pat Roppel of Wrangell accepting the Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Newsletter Award.



Elizabeth Cook presents Candy Waugaman the Contributions to Alaska History award at the October 17th meeting of the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society in Fairbanks.



Jane G. Haigh displays her Historian of the Year award.

2007 AHS AWARDS RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE

President Bruce Merrell and Awards Chair Ron Inouye presented the Alaska Historical Society's annual awards at the AHS/Museums Alaska meeting in Homer in October. The individuals, historical societies, and public institutions recognized this year did outstanding research, writing, and promotion of Alaska history.

Bruce Merrell presented the **2007 Beaver Log** (President's Award) "for exuberance, hard work, and high standards" to **Katie Johnson-Ringsmuth**, who served as program chair this year and last. Katie has written and published several books on Alaska canneries and will have another publication next spring on Father Hubbard. She teaches history at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Lake Clark & Katmai Parks and Preserves Research Center, National Park Service, Jeanne Schaaf, Chief of Cultural Resources, received the *Esther Billman Award of Excellence*. Under the inspired leadership of Jeanne Schaaf, the center has researched, produced, and published an impressive number of studies in the last five years that have greatly advanced understanding of human occupation and activities of southwest Alaska. Publications have included *Buried Dreams: The Rise and Fall of a Clam Cannery on the Katmai Coast*; *More Reading from One Man's Wilderness: The Journals of Richard L. Proenneke*; and *Witness: Cultural Remains from a Catastrophic Landscape*. Notably, a number of young historians and archaeologists have gotten tremendous training in research and writing about the past and cultural resources.

Nancy Ricketts of Sitka was recognized with the **Evangeline Atwood Award**. Nancy moved to Sitka in the early 1970s to work at Sheldon Jackson College's Stratton Library. For years she was the key to getting into the treasures of the Andrews Collection at the library. Through her efforts, the Merrill glass plates were organized and stored properly and a finding aid prepared for the collection. She has researched and written about Tilly Paul Tamaree, missionary, interpreter, teacher and advocate for Native and women's rights; about the Sitka Summer Music Festival; Sitka Conservation Society; and St. Peter's Episcopal Church. She now volunteers for the Sitka Historical Society and at the Sitka public library.

Jane G. Haigh is this year's recipient of the **Historian of the Year Award**, given to an Alaska resident for publication of notable new material about Alaska history during the past year. Her new book, *Searching for Fannie Quigley: A Wilderness Life in the Shadow of Mount McKinley*, and *King Con: The Story of Soapy Smith* published last year, have made new and accurate information known about Alaskan gold rush characters. A 35-year resident of Fairbanks, Jane has written a number of books, one on early 1900s house interiors in Alaska, and is co-author of *Gold Rush Women*; *Gold Rush Children*; and *Gold Rush Dogs*. She also curated exhibits on gold rush women

and the Alaska Highway for the University of Alaska museum.

Anchorage's **Cook Inlet Historical Society** received the **Pathfinder Award** for *Anchorage 1910-1935 Interactive Display*. This project expands on the work John Bagoy initiated on Anchorage's pioneer families. At kiosks in the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, people can learn about people, places and events in Anchorage's history through photographs, maps, and textual information. It is an innovative and extremely attractive project effectively employing computer technology.

The **Friends of the Wrangell Museum, Patricia Roppel, editor**, was selected for the **Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Newsletter Award**. For the past three years the Friends has published *Wrangell History* monthly. It is a fund-raiser for the museum, and over 120 people subscribe. The newsletter includes interesting—sometimes quirky—excerpts from letters, diaries and newspaper articles and researched pieces about the town, events, people, and the greater Stikine River area.

Candy Waugaman of Fairbanks was honored through the **Contributions to Alaska History Award**. Candy has collected Alaskanana for years and generously shares it, her extensive knowledge of Alaska history, and her time and money to help promote understanding of the state's past. Candy has been president of the Alaska Historical Society and initiated the very successful annual fundraising auction which is now in its 7th year. She is currently a member of the Alaska Historical Commission. Candy has had a weekly column featuring a historic photograph in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* since 1991. Last spring she opened Historic Hall, a museum, in the historic First Avenue Bathhouse in Fairbanks.

The Alaska Historical Society made a **Special Award** to **Dave Merrill**, a 3rd/4th grade teacher at Ladd Elementary School in Fairbanks. Last spring his class completed a two year project to create *Our City Past and Present: A Student Led Walking Tour of Downtown Fairbanks*. The great little booklet includes maps, historical facts, insights and drawings by his students along with historic and contemporary photographs. The students visited sites, conducted interviews, and did library research. Even better, the project is going to be an ongoing one at the school.

Last year the society inaugurated **Student and Beginning Professional Travel Scholarship Awards** to help people attend and participate in the Alaska Historical Society's annual meeting. The recipients this year are **Elizabeth Kunibe** of Juneau, and **Joshua Riley** and **Christopher Roe** of Anchorage. Each received \$750, and each presented a well-received interesting paper at Homer.

Wow! Congratulations to all of the award recipients. There's great work being done.

News & Information

Ever watch the History Channel? Of course you have, but did you know about the awards they offer to help preserve our communities and nation's history? Kodiak was the happy recipient of a grant whereby students will interview seniors and make videos of the results. For details, go to www.saveourhistory.org.



There is a bit of good news from Congress. History preservation funds have been increased slightly this year. It's a case of throwing a couple of extra bones to the starving, but at least it's better than recent appropriations.

And where did the news about the History Channel and Congress originate? Why, from the *AK* newsletter, of course. It's put out by the Office of History and Archaeology. To view, go to www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks or get your very own e-mail subscription by writing jo.antonson@alaska.gov. It will keep you abreast of meetings, possible grants, and enough other information to make you feel you live in New York.



A committee has been formed by the AHS board of directors to explore the possibility of creating an Alaska digital encyclopedia. The idea for the encyclopedia is to be a Web-based, authoritative source of information about the history, cultures, and geography of Alaska. We hope to provide Alaskans and anyone interested in the state with an accurate and reliable resource to explore the heritage of the 49th state. The intent is also to serve as a source to direct users to already established Web sites. Ideas? Suggestions? Need to know more? Contact person is Marilyn Knapp, knappmr@muni.org or 907/343-6155. The committee also wants to thank the Alaska Humanities Forum for the start-up grant of \$2,000.



Feeling your museum's stocking will not only be empty on Christmas, but it has large holes in it? Don't forget the **Alaska State Museum** has a grants-in-aid program for the small and needy. Write them at 395 Whittier Street, Juneau, 99801-1718, or tap in the name plus Web site in Google and go for it.



The **American Association for State and Local History** invites nominations for its 2008 Leadership in History Awards. An AASLH award is prestigious national recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of local, state and regional history. Historical societies, museums, individuals are recognized for excellence, exhibits, public and educational programming, special projects, publications, multimedia projects, preservation or restoration projects. Nominations forms, due March 1, 2008, are available at www.aaslb.org, or by contacting the AASLH office at 615.320.3203. Recent award winning Alaska projects have been to the Juneau-Douglas City Museum for its preservation and interpretation of an aboriginal fish trap and to the Wrangell Museum after it planned, designed and installed excellent new permanent exhibits.



Dagmar Phillips, a history teacher at West Anchorage High School, was recognized this fall with the Governor's **2007 Alaska History Teacher of the Year Award**. This is only the second year the award has been made. Last year's recipient was Brenda Campen of Sitka who teaches at Mt. Edgecumbe High School. The award is one of the annual Governor's Awards for the Arts and Humanities.



Kenny Lake School history and technology teacher **Raymond J. Voley** is **Alaska's 2008 Teacher of the Year**. Ray has taught for 15 years, the past eight years at Kenny Lake. Last summer he and nine students completed a 90-minute documentary on the history of the Kennecott mine. Ray is one of the instructors for the Alaska History Teacher's Institute, a program of the Alaska Humanities Forum that is introducing a curriculum and website developed to help high school students meet the state's Alaska History and Cultural Studies graduation requirement.



Congratulations to **Mary Childers Mangusso** who was appointed last summer to be the first occupant of the endowed Arthur T. Fathauer Chair of History at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Mary has taught at the university since 1974. She is an editorial advisor for the Alaska Historical Society's journal, *Alaska History*, served two terms on the society's board of directors, and was the annual meeting program chair for two years. She also served two terms on the Alaska Historical Commission and has been active with the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society. The late Helen Ann Fathauer established the chair in honor of her husband who studied history at the University of Chicago.



Last summer the papers of **Bob and Evangeline Atwood** were donated by the family's estate to the **Archives and Manuscripts Department, University of Alaska Anchorage**. Along with the 200 boxes of documents, the estate is donating \$109,000 to pay to process the collection, produce a research guide, and create a web site. The Atwoods moved to Anchorage in 1935. Bob purchased the *Anchorage Daily Times* and served as editor and publisher until 1989. Evangeline authored several books and was one of the founding members of the Alaska Historical Society. Evangeline died in 1987 and Bob in 1997. The papers include letters, business documents, diaries, and photographs.





Alaska school children perform in the *Christmas Tree*, 1916 in Ruby.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections, Wickersham State
Historic Site Photograph Collection, ASL-P277-004-118.

Happy Holidays!

Editor's Comments

Of Furnaces, Refrigerators, and Electric Lights

During the winter, while walking home, I often think of the early settlers of Alaska towns. Native Alaskans had evolved quite comfortable habitations, whether the semi-subterranean dwellings of the Inupiat, Yup'ik, and Aleuts or the large clan houses of the Tlingits.

It was very different for the European settlers. They insisted on bringing along their traditional houses and town plans, no matter how ill-suited for the climate. Before street lights, the winter nights would be very dark, lit only by the occasional dim gleams of kerosene lamps (universally known as "coal-oil" lamps) shining behind the curtains of houses. These displayed more vague outlines than illuminated sidewalks.

When the worker arrived home, unless there was someone already there, it would be to a cold, dark cabin. Matches would be by the coal-oil lamp, and soon a glow lit up a small area. The fire from the morning would have burnt out, so paper over kindling over wood was piled, and now matches would be struck by a hand reluctantly leaving its warm glove. It would be a while before the cabin was warm enough for the resident to shed a coat. Then there was the problem of cooking supper on the top of the woodstove. The meat would be brought in from the meat cache outside, unless it was so cold it would be frozen. The cache was a box with shelves and screened doors nailed to an outside wall and high enough to discourage squirrels, crows, ravens, and other small hungry predators.

It has been noted that our not-so-distant ancestors spent most of their time taking care of the everyday chores of living. Lamps to fill, woodstoves to keep going with wood that had to be cut, food to prepare from scratch. Laundry done by heating water (which had to be carried in from a well, creek, or rain barrel) on the stove, then poured into a tub. Soap shaved from big yellow bars that resisted dissolving in the tub, then clothes, sheets, and all rubbed by hand on a scrub-board. Another tub with clear water for rinsing, then laundry wrung out by hand, unless a wringer was owned. Ironing was done by heating flatirons on the stove and smoothing the cloth on a board.

We can only imagine the joy when the first street lights went up, not to mention the thrill of electricity or gas arriving to light and heat the town.

Today we complain about the cost of furnace repair and the size of the oil and electric bills. Would we really want it any other way? So enjoy your holidays this year and give a pat to your furnace and perhaps tie a bow on the light switch for the magic it produces.

See you next year.

D. L.



(Photo above) "Ole Nichlai prepares supper in shelter cabin."

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